



Marie Karlberg
The Brutal Truth

October 12–November 30, 2018

ANYTHING BUTT HOMAGE

Bonny Poon is pleased to present the Parisian debut of US-based artist, Marie Karlberg.

For “The Brutal Truth”, Karlberg presents three new paintings that elaborate on an existing series. Dipping her posterior in gouache, she leaves *behind* a trail of butt prints. The resulting colours, pronounced on a sparse white backdrop, playfully *sit on* the language and economy of abstract painting. Comic reminders of abstract painting’s performative and gestural origins—or, “birth”—currently re-dressed in a distinctly female articulation, amplified by wounds of art jargon. Made of red and black adhesive vinyl, the letters glimpsed under the residual colour butt-field, spell out linguistic fragments of art-world currency, commonly circulated, if rarely understood. Their uttering imports, for the orator, instant relevance: *Value Form, Success Medium, Not For Sale*—also a coy rejoinder to her early New York performance, *A Woman For Sale*—and lastly, *C’est Cul*, a pun that incorporates the French word for “butt”, and slang for “sex”.

cul

1

n a passage with access only at one end

Synonyms: *cul de sac, DEAD END*

Type of: passage

a way through or along which someone or something may pass

Quickly, one notices the edges of the paintings drooping; wrinkles gather along the borders in a succession. Bad paintings ...? Gravity is a law that applies to the wreckage of our bodies, and less regularly, to art. It is said that men age better than women. Karlberg’s paintings are idly stretched; confused staples drill irregular patterns into the perimeter, and barely hold the canvas taut. The skin unfolds, like a warm, corpulent embrace. When questioned on the importance of the format, Karlberg remarked that her butt-print paintings can accommodate any surface. The value is predominantly in the butt-print itself, whether the prints adorn a wall, a car, or a pre-stretched canvas. One can cynically conclude that, no matter the support, the butt—or sex—forever triumphs as a stand-alone transaction. Another reading offers the butt in a different light: more *cheeky*, an emancipatory *up-yours!* retort. The political ambiguity of the gesture undercuts its seeming simplicity; such double entendre pervades Karlberg’s critical artistic practice, which has made a wholesale comedy of the contemporary art field by satirically, often brutally, implicating her own stakes, prejudices, and biography.

Underlying the form of Karlberg’s three paintings, now on display, is a less apparent economic decision: the stretchers are *has-beens*, resuscitated from the transactional limbo of the gallery’s storage. Karlberg inserts her paintings literally into the tradition of the gallery’s past “painting shows” by taking as index, the dimensions and support structures of previously exhibited paintings. As such, her butts insidiously surf on the painting-as-commodity’s many lifetimes, framing their less visible states—that of being parked, and, indefinitely, out of circulation.

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